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Analysis of criteria for evaluating environmentally responsible hotels: theoretical aspects and methodology

Abstract

Objective: The objective of this study is to determine the main criteria for evaluating environmentally responsible hotels based on a detailed analysis of international experience in conducting eco-certification in the tourism and hospitality industry by leading organizations around the world.

Methods: The main methods are theoretical research methods, such as analysis of indicators of eco-certification of green hotels, analysis of international standards for eco-certification of accommodation services, as well as classification of criteria for evaluating environmentally responsible hotels.

Findings: As a result of analysis and research in this direction, two groups of indicators have been identified that directly and indirectly determine the possibility of establishing a hotel among the categories of environmentally responsible hotels: direct resource-saving criteria and management and information.

Conclusions: Taking into account that Kazakhstan has not yet developed a methodology for eco-certification of collective and individual accommodation facilities, as well as procedures for assigning an eco-label to green or eco-hotels, the study is of a recommendatory practical nature for the development of mechanisms for the introduction of environmentally responsible hotels in the tourist services market.

Keywords: sustainable tourism development, green hotels, environmentally responsible hotels, eco-label, eco-certification of hotels, eco-certification criteria.

Introduction

According to the analysis of research in the field of sustainable development of tourism enterprises and the hospitality industry, there is an active growth in demand for environmentally responsible hotels in the world. Today, there is an increased consumer demand for eco-branded goods in the world. However, we should note the transformation of the concept of eco-consumption to the market of tourist and hotel services. The problems of greening hotel and tourist services have increasingly considered by researchers of the tourism industry against the background of the development of eco-tourism.

In Kazakhstan, the development of hotels that provide accommodation and food services in accordance with the "green concept of production and consumption" is a new direction in the development of the hotel industry. According to the results of the study, the practice of operating green hotels in the Republic is on the stage of forthcoming, despite the development of eco-tourism in recreational areas. At the same time, research articles of domestic researchers in the field of determining the development opportunities for priority types of tourism allow us to conclude that our country has enough regions with high tourist and recreational potential, which sufficiently possess the main prerequisites for the development of "green tourism" (Shayekina, Mamrayeva, Tashenova, 2015; Mamrayeva, 2018; Mamrayeva, Tashenova, 2020). The emergence of eco-sites near national tourist parks can also contribute to the development of accommodation facilities focused on environmental responsibility.

In the course of analyzing the possibilities of developing environmentally responsible hotels in our country, we have identified difficulties in determining and correlating these types of hotels in the tourism industry due to the impossibility of classifying and certifying green hotels. One of the main reasons for the passive development of green hotels in Kazakhstan is the lack of mechanisms for the formation and development of green hotels, which primarily include the certification procedure, as well as the low involvement of tourists and the population to the problems of greening in the country. However, recent events in the tour-

ism industry and in all other sectors of the economy, associated with the emergence and development of the COVID-19 pandemic in almost all countries of the world, have clearly demonstrated the need for sustainable economic development throughout the world and in all sectors. Issues of respect for the environment, the transition from a linear economy to a circular economy, the introduction of sustainable development concepts in all tourism enterprises, the safety of tourist's accommodation, including the long-term and reuse of resources in hotels, will become more relevant than ever in the coming decades. In our opinion, based on the study of foreign experience, namely the work of international companies engaged in certification of hotel services, it is necessary to determine the main requirements and indicators for eco-hotels and try to apply them in the domestic practice of hotel services.

The fact that over time green or so-called eco-hotels will be in high demand among a certain category of consumers, there is no doubt, due to the new formation of consumer behavior in the market of innovative goods and services aimed at a more careful attitude to the environment, and of course first of all to their own health and lifestyle.

Literature Review

In connection with the development of environmentally responsible enterprises in the hospitality industry, there are many interpretations of the definition of "eco-hotel", "environmentally responsible hotels", "green hotels". As for researcher Astafyeva, she defines environmentally responsible hotels as eco-hotels and suggests considering them as the product of a conceptual innovation in the hospitality industry, the main goal of which is to create new customer-oriented accommodation services that comply with the norms and rules of preserving the eco-environment of a tourist object (Astafyeva, 2016).

Authors E. V. Galenko and P. O. Krivoruchka note an increase in consumer demand in recent years for accommodation services in environmentally responsible hotels that use "green technologies" in order to cause less damage to the environment (Galenko, Krivoruchka, 2018, 110-113).

The high involvement of consumers of hotel services in environmental safety issues once again proves the relevance of the study. According to some authors, the model of consumer behavior of guests in hotels with a "green label" is characterized by high satisfaction and loyalty of guests towards hotels whose activities are aimed at reducing environmental harm, thus noting the positive experience of implementing green practices in the hotel industry (Merlia et al, 2019).

Some scientists noted that tourists who once lived in green hotels will definitely want to return to green hotels in their next trips, and also indicated a different degree of desire to return to hotels of tourists with different nationalities on the example of a specific tourist destination (Berezan et al, 2013).

In our opinion, the environmental behavior in tourism will always be under the interests, it is quite natural that the development of green hotels is a two-way interaction involving on the one hand the formation, organization and implementation of the concept of green production of hotel product, and the other environmental services consumption of accommodation and catering in hotels by tourists. Okumus, F., Köseoglu, M.A., Chan, E., Hon, A., Avci, U. paid their special attention to the behavior of staff in green hotels based on the analysis of such factors as knowledge, awareness and care that characterize the staff of green hotels and proposed a model of their environmental behavior (Okumus et al, 2019). Perhaps this model will allow hotel managers to be more attentive to issues of environmental awareness and desire to implement green practices in hotels, as well as to apply them in eco-strategies of personnel management.

The authors of Bashir and others point out the primary need to take into account the interrelated influence of conscious environmental consumption of hotel services and personal norms of guest behavior when forming the concept of eco-hotels development (Bashir et al, 2019). Thus, the concept of "green hotel" is closely related to such definitions and postulates as respect for the environment during your stay and vacation, the use of green technologies, awareness of the green label of the hotel, the staff's adherence to eco-standards of environmentally responsible behavior.

The results of the research in the field of eco-certification in the practice of hotel enterprises allow us to state the fact that this procedure has a positive impact on the dynamics of sustainable development in the hotel industry, namely, it helps to inform guests about the features of living in environmentally responsible hotels. Thus, Geerts, W. identified three main advantages of implementing eco-certification in the hospitality industry (Geerts, 2014). Let's list the main advantages of this certification procedure for the hotels, according to the above-mentioned author:

1) eco-certification means a voluntary examination of the hotel for compliance with environmental requirements;

2) getting an eco-label by hotels after eco-certification allows to increase the profitability of the hotel business, in some cases it serves as a good marketing tool for promoting the hotel as a tourist eco-brand;

3) guests who book rooms in hotels with an eco-label can be sure that the hotel complies with the concept of minimizing harm to the environment.











Russian authors Nizhegorodtsev and Ratner expressed their opinion about the development of certified green hotels in Russia as a nascent direction in the hotel business, and note the low level of environmental certification of Russian hotels, linking it with inefficient environmental management (Nizhegorodtsev, Ratner, 2015).

Methodology

In the world practice of forming and developing the concept of a green economy, including in the field of sustainable development of tourism and the hospitality industry, there is a need to define criteria and standards that identify products and services of environmentally responsible enterprises.

A striking example of an international organization that professionally defines environmentally preferable "green goods and services" is the non-profit Association for voluntary eco-certification of goods and services, the global network of eco-labels (GEN). This organization has been operating for over 25 years, in table 1 below, we have identified a rating of the countries-leaders of the international certification of goods and services by number of standards and certified products, services in the field of environmental responsibility.

Table 1. Countries participating in the Global Ecolabelling Network (GEN) international certification of goods and services in 2017

Countries-leaders in the number of standards				Countries-leaders in the number of certified products and services			
Country/region	Participant of the program	Label	Number of standards	Country/region	Participant of the program	Label	Certified products
Korea	Korean Eco-Label Program		165	EU	EU Ecolabel		70000
Thailand	Green Label: Thailand		123	Northern Europe	Nordic Swan Ecolabel		36300
China	Green Mark Program		120	Northern America (USA)	Green Seal		26000
Germany	The Blue Angel Eco-Label		120	Korea	Korean Eco-Label Program		14091
China (CEC)	China Environmental Labelling		99	Germany	The Blue Angel Eco-Label		12000

Note: compiled by the authors based on the resource «The Global Ecolabelling Network 2017» <https://view.publitas.com/global-ecolabelling-network/gen-annual-report-2017/page/1>

The processes of greening in the hotel business are directly related to the growing demand for tourist accommodation in green hotels. Green Key Global Organization (2019) defines that the research of hotel booking site Booking.com worldwide shows 68% of tourists prefer to stay in eco-oriented hotels.

Hotel companies around the world are increasingly implementing the concept of environmental responsibility in their practice, paying attention to the problems of rational resource consumption, control of solid and food waste emissions during the production of a hotel product. So, the hotel chain Marriott International in 2018 announced its plans to reduce water consumption by 15%, the carbon impact on the environment by

30%, the amount of waste by 45-50%, these goals are united by a program developed by the hotel called "Serve 360" (Harris, 2018).

The Radisson Hotel Group hotel chain (2020) takes an active position in the field of certification of eco-hotels, more than 450 hotels of this chain are assigned eco-labels, the network cooperates with leading organizations specializing in certification in the field of ecologization as Green Key Global, EarthCheck.

It is clear that to get an eco-certificate, the hotel must meet the basic requirements for green hotels by international organizations that have the right to conduct this procedure. Therefore, attention should be paid to the analysis of the activities of international organizations that conduct professional certification procedures and develop standards for compliance of accommodation facilities with environmentally responsible hotels. This will determine the most criteria that must be taken into account to evaluate environmentally responsible hotels.

According to the analysis, the most significant international organizations in the field of certification of the hotel business environment are such leading organizations as *Green Key Global*, *Leed*, *Green Seal*, *HVS*, and the Russian eco-quality organization «*Leaf of life*».

Let's consider the methodology of eco-certification of hotels offered by the international organization Green Key Global (Figure 1).

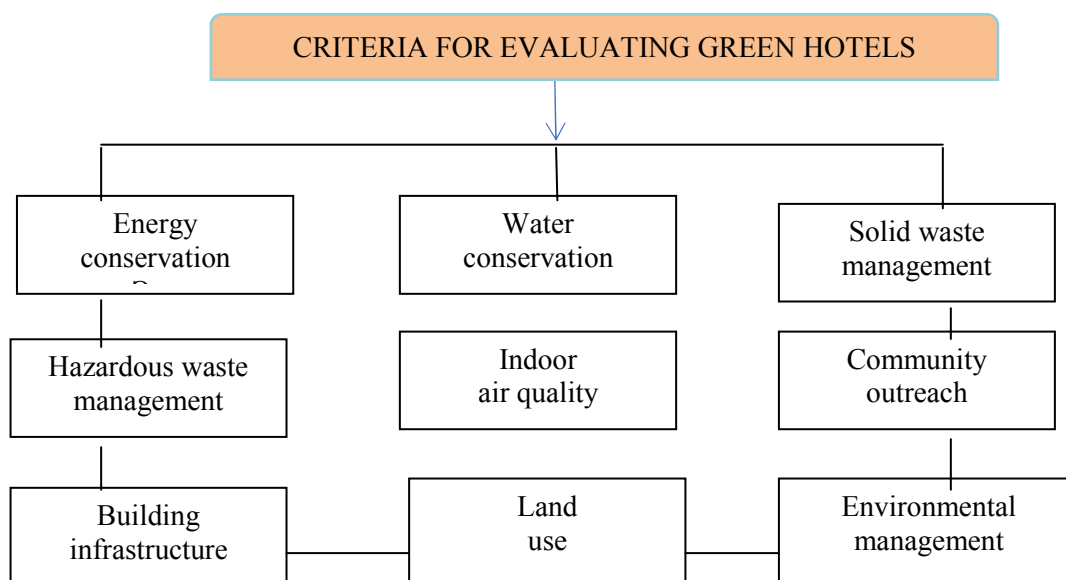


Figure 1 – Main criteria for evaluating environmentally responsible hotels by Green Key Global

(Note: compiled by the authors based on <https://www.greenkey.global/>)

Since Green Key Global has awarded the Green Key environmental badge to more than 3,100 hotels and other institutions in 66 countries around the world, this eco-badge allows hotels to achieve the following results:

1) increase the hotel occupancy rate by applying eco-labeling, strengthen the market position due to the competitive eco-advantages of the hotel in the market of hotel services;

2) reduce financial costs by conducting an environmental audit, based on the results of which the hotel offers specific recommendations aimed at reducing costs and increasing the productivity of the hotel enterprise;

3) certification conducted by Green Key Global is recommended by the Global Council for sustainable tourism (GTC), and also accompanies the necessary information on environmental conservation.

Green Key Global considers energy conservation, water conservation, solid waste management, and others as the main areas for analyzing "green practices"

However, it should be noted that the goals of eco-certification of this organization are directly related to seven categories of the 17 international goals in the field of sustainable development adopted by UN members in 2015 (Figure 2).



Figure 2 – Compliance of eco-certification goals with international UN sustainable development goals

(Note: compiled by the authors based on <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>)

The world scale of development of this type of eco-labeling of hotels, restaurants and other tourism facilities is shown by the following data: the Netherlands-647, France-644, Greece-376, Belgium-257, Portugal-180, Sweden-165, Turkey-97, Russia-25. In general, according to the analysis, four companies from more than 60 countries have passed eco-certification of this organization (Figure 3).

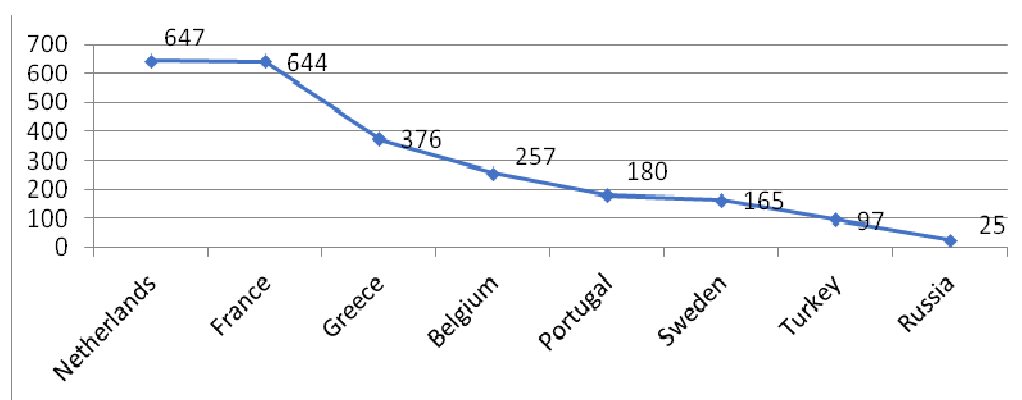


Figure 3 – Eco-certification by countries in the world according to Green Key Global

(Note: compiled by the authors based on <https://www.greenkey.global/green-key-sites>)

According to the research, experts highly appreciate the work of the international organization LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) in the field of eco-certification of buildings and structures, including hotels, the main goal of which is to reduce or eliminate the negative impact on the environment. This program evaluates the level of environmental construction of buildings and structures. According to the score, depending on the number of points scored, the hotel is assigned one of four rating levels as a result of eco - certification: platinum – 80 and higher points, gold – 60-79 points, silver-50-59 points, certified 40-49 points.

In Russia, eco-certification services for hotels are provided by the organization "Ecological Union", which is part of the international organization GEN and has the right to conduct certification of goods and services, assigning the Ecolabel "Leaf of life".

In order to pass the eco-certification and assign the eco-label "Leaf of life", a number of procedures must be completed in stages, from submitting an application in the prescribed form and sending it for consideration to the eco-certification body to the assessment by auditors of all hotel services and checking the quality management system, this stage also includes laboratory tests. In general, according to the results of the environmental audit, the hotel must score at least 25 points, only if the hotel can get an eco-label "Leaf of life" that meets the requirements for compliance with an environmentally responsible hotel (Figure 4).

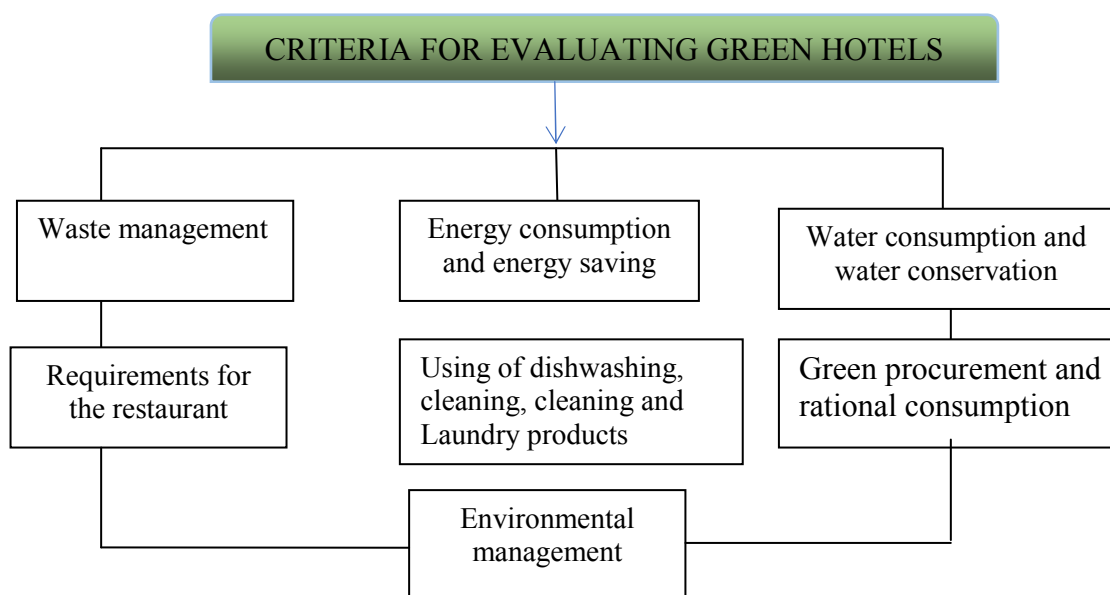


Figure 4 – Criteria for evaluating environmentally responsible hotels by «Leaf of life»

(Note: compiled by the authors based on <https://ecounion.ru/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/sredstva-razmeshenia.pdf>)

One of the most popular organizations in the field of certification of products and services is the independent organization Green Seal, founded in 1989, which is also a member of the international organization GEN. When conducting eco-certification procedures, Green Seal is based on the international standard ISO 14020:2000, which contributes to the achievement of the 17 sustainable development goals proposed by the UN in 2015.

Having studied the criteria for evaluating the environmental compatibility of accommodation facilities provided by Green Seal, it is necessary to highlight the special requirements in the GS-33 certification concerning indicators related to energy in hotels. For example, after an analysis of compliance with the eco-criteria of this organization, the hotel can be assigned one of three levels: bronze, silver or gold. As shown by the analysis of indicators of eco-certification of this organization, as the higher level of the hotel, the higher a number of requirements. If hotel plans to go to the highest level as "gold", then special attention should be paid to the problems of energy consumption, namely, it is necessary to monitor the energy consumption in all rooms of the hotel.

The report of the study conducted by scientists at the University of California indicates the positive effect of passing the Green Seal certification of hotels. So, for example, the transition of hotels from the category of bronze certification to silver allowed hotels in Los Angeles to reduce additional emissions by 8.8%. The same hotels that switched from silver to gold were gradually able to reduce emissions by 18.2%. Extrapolation of these indicators to the urban level allowed researchers to predict higher results of the Green Seal eco-certification program: if all hotels in the city received a silver level of certification, the current level of greenhouse gas emissions in the city would decrease by about 0.7%, and if they passed the "gold" certification, the current air emissions would decrease by another 1.3%, which would lead to a total reduction of harmful substances in the atmosphere by 2% (McConagha et al, 2017).

This organization has developed 27 standards for more than 500 categories of goods and services, each of which contributes to the formation and sustainable development of the circular economy. To pass certification for compliance with environmental standards, accommodation facilities must meet the category "GS33-Hotels and real estate", the hotel has the opportunity to pass one of three levels of certification: bronze, silver, gold. The analysis of this standard allows to identify the following indicators for evaluating environmentally responsible hotels (Figure 5).

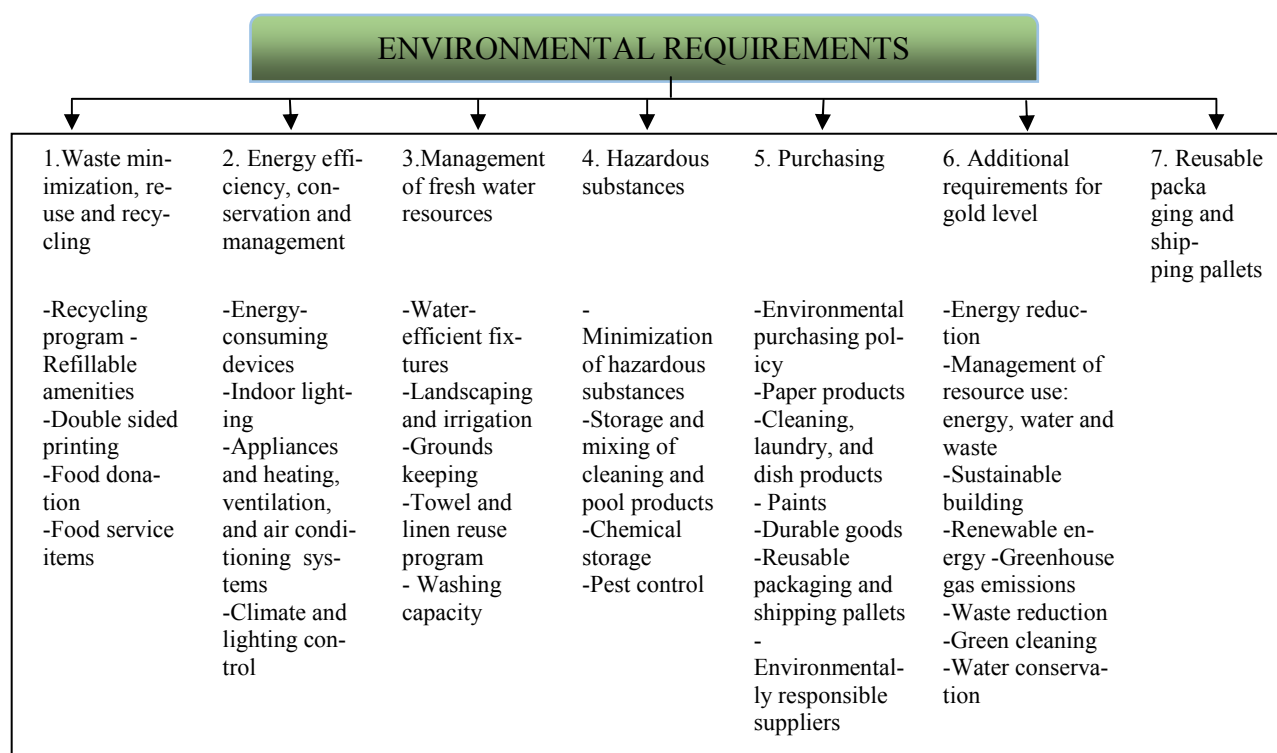


Figure 5 – Criteria for evaluating environmentally responsible hotels by Green Seal

(Note: compiled by the authors based on <https://greenseal.org/certification/get-started//>)

Results

Thus, the use of eco-labeling allows to strengthen the image of the hotel, use eco-labeling on a legal basis, expand the customer base and strengthen the loyalty of guests, apply innovative eco-technologies in the service of guests. An important aspect in the process of assigning eco-labeling to hotel enterprises is the selection of criteria for environmentally responsible hotels. For this purpose, the international organization for certification of goods and services Green Key Global has developed 13 criteria for 6 categories of institutions, such as hotels, hostels, campsites, recreation parks, restaurants, and conference centers.











The results of the study of the methodology for evaluating foreign professional organizations, such as Green Key Global, Green Seal, LEAD, allowed us to distinguish the main groups of indicators. Analysis of the criteria for international standardization of "environmentally responsible hotels" allows identifying two groups of evaluation indicators, such as "direct resource-saving criteria" and "management and information criteria".

We have included such indicators as water consumption, energy consumption, cleaning services, laundry and landscaping as direct resource-saving indicators, since these indicators can directly affect the rational use of resources without harm to the environment. In our opinion, the hotel management staff should pay special attention to the concept of environmental management, in this regard the management and information criteria for evaluating eco-hotels, such as attracting staff, environmental management, informing guests, corporate social responsibility, internal environment and administration.

The proposed methodology for evaluating the criteria of environmentally responsible hotels most optimally covers all the indicators and requirements imposed in foreign practice.

Table 2 below shows the classification of criteria for evaluating environmentally responsible hotels with the main requirements for each individual criterion.

Table 2. Classification of criteria for evaluating environmentally responsible hotels

Criteria	Ecolabel	Evaluation criteria
1. Direct resource-saving criteria		
1.1 Water consumption		1) use of water leak sensors, rational use of cold and hot water in the room; 2) application of water-saving faucets for washbasins; 3) installation of soap and shampoo dispensers in bathrooms and guest rooms; 4) possibility of secondary use of water, including rainwater
1.2 Energy consumption		1) introduction of energy-saving lamps (usually no less than 40-60% of lighting equipment), automatic electricity switches in hotels, 2) use of air conditioning in all rooms only in the presence of a guest, remote control of lighting, 3) use of technologies of the "Smart Hotel"
1.3 Cleaning and Laundry Services		1) use of environmentally friendly detergents, eco-marked products in the process of cleaning rooms, halls, lobbies, production and storage facilities on the territory of the hotel, 2) use of washing machines completely filled with dishes at a low effective temperature; 3) provision of eco-marked services: dry cleaning, beauty salon, Laundry, restaurant
1.4 Landscaping of the territory		1) landscaping of the surrounding area, landscape, 2) creating a favorable eco-environment for hotel guests, 3) creating a neutral and active system landscaping in the working and recreational areas accordingly; 4) work to improve the ecosystem of the surrounding area; 5) use of organic means for garden fertilizers and for insect control
2. Management and information criteria		
2.1 Recruitment of staff		1) conducting training sessions and seminars for hotel employees on the company's eco-policy, 2) monitoring the compliance of personnel with environmental requirements for labeling, separate waste collection, dosage of detergents, etc. 3) implementation of the function of responsible manager for compliance with eco-activities
2.2 Environmental Management		1) creation of an effective control and management system in the field of minimization of environmental damage, control of hydrocarbon emissions into the atmosphere, and environmental protection 2) rental of eco-friendly vehicles, such as bicycles, electric cars 3) transfer of decommissioned furniture and equipment to charitable organizations
2.3 Informing guests		1) familiarizing guests with the hotel's eco-policy; 2) mandatory presence of an eco-label in the hotel; 3) the use of "green cards" in hotel rooms, calling for a responsible attitude of guests to replace towels and bed linen; 4) the presence of eco-labels in all hotel products
2.4. Corporate social responsibility		1) forming a moral and ethical code within the hotel's eco-policy; 2) maintaining the principles and norms of voluntary eco-certification of the hotel; 3) conducting eco-PR campaigns by the hotel; 4) labor protection of hotel employees and ensuring their safety
2.5. Internal environment		1) maintaining the eco-concept in all hotel departments: Front Office, room service, engineering, F&B, housekeeping, marketing and booking, etc., 2) development and implementation of eco-technologies in all phases of guest service in the hotel: before arrival, arrival, accommodation, departure
2.6. Administration		1) mandatory development and implementation of the eco-management system and its elements; 2) periodic monitoring and measurement of water and energy consumption indicators, and, if necessary, preventive measures to eliminate violations
<i>Note: compiled by the authors based on the resource based on the analysis of reports and data from international organizations Green Key Global, Green Seal, LEAD [https://www.greenkey.global/, https://greenseal.org/certification/get-started/, https://www.usgbc.org/leed].</i>		

Discussion and conclusion

The dynamics of increasing demand for environmental goods and services among eco-oriented consumers gave rise to the formation and development of mechanisms for assigning an environmental mark to goods and services in various industries. This trend has not spared the accommodation sector, which is the main material and technical base of the tourism and hospitality industry. International practice witnesses an increase in the number of tourists who prefer to stay in hotels that have passed the eco-certification procedures and have an eco-label sign. This segment of consumers of tourist products has not been ignored by many hotel chains, which primarily responded to the sustainable consumer behavior of tourists with special concern for the problems of environmental conservation, as well as life safety.

The certification and standardization processes of environmentally responsible hotels are a necessary tool for confirming the environmental friendliness of the provided accommodation and catering facilities. As the results of the research have shown, there is no approved single standard in the form of a standard that would clearly define the requirements for all areas and criteria of green hotels around the world. Since the introduction of a single international certification of eco-hotels is impossible due to a number of related factors, such as geographical location, level of economic development, income level, cultural values, level of involvement of the population in environmental issues and the circular economy and others.

The analysis of criteria for evaluating environmentally responsible hotels allows identifying the most effective methods of international organizations whose activities are aimed at sustainable development. As a result of our analysis, we have identified the most necessary criteria for developing the methodology for evaluating activities of environmentally responsible hotels.

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**Экологиялық жауапты қонақ үйлерді бағалау критерийлерін талдау:
теориялық аспектілер және әдіснамасы**

Аңдатпа

Мақсаты: Бүкіл әлемдегі жетекші ұйымдардың туризм және қонақжайлылық индустриясында экосертификаттауды жүргізудің халықаралық тәжірибесін егжей-тегжейлі талдау негізінде экологиялық жауапты қонақ үйлерді бағалаудың негізгі өлшемдерін анықтау.

Әдісі: Негізгі әдістер ретінде «жасыл отельдерді» экосертификаттау көрсеткіштерін талдау, орналастыру қызметтерін экосертификаттаудың халықаралық стандарттарын талдау, сондай-ақ экологиялық жауапты қонақ үйлерді бағалау критерийлерін жіктеу сияқты зерттеудің теориялық әдістері қолданылған.

Қорытынды: Талдау мен зерттеу нәтижесінде экологиялық жауапты қонақ үйлер категориясында қонақ үйді анықтау мүмкіндігін тікелей және жанама анықтайтын критерийлердің екі тобы анықталған: тікелей ресурс үнемдейтін өлшемдер және басқару-ақпараттық.

Тұжырымдама: Қазақстанда ұжымдық және жеке орналастыру құралдарын экосертификаттау әдістемесі, сондай-ақ «жасыл» немесе экоқонақ үйлерге эколейбл беру рәсімдері әзірленбегенін ескере отырып, жүргізілген зерттеу туристік қызмет көрсету нарығында экологиялық жауапты қонақ үйлерді енгізу тетіктерін әзірлеу үшін ұсынымдық практикалық сипатқа ие.

Кілт сөздер: туризмнің тұрақты дамуы, «жасыл» қонақ үйлер, экологиялық жауапты қонақ үйлер, эколейбл, қонақ үйлердің экосертификациясы, экосертификация критерийлері.

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**Анализ критериев оценки экологически ответственных гостиниц:
теоретические аспекты и методология**

Аннотация

Цель: Определение основных критериев оценки экологически ответственных гостиниц на основе подробного анализа международного опыта проведения экосертификации в индустрии туризма и гостеприимства ведущими организациями во всем мире.

Методы: В качестве основных методов использовались теоретические методы исследования, такие как анализ показателей экосертификации «зеленых» отелей, анализ международных стандартов экосертификации услуг размещения, а также классификация критериев оценки экологически ответственных гостиниц.

Результаты: В результате анализа и исследования в данном направлении определены две группы показателей, прямо и косвенно определяющих возможность определения отеля в категории экологически ответственных гостиниц: прямые ресурсосберегающие критерии и управленческо-информационные.

Выводы: Учитывая, что в Казахстане еще не разработана методика экосертификации средств коллективных и индивидуальных средств размещения, а также процедуры присвоения эколейбла «зеленым», или экоотелям, проведенное исследование носит рекомендательный характер для разработки механизмов внедрения экологически ответственных гостиниц на рынке туристских услуг.

Ключевые слова: устойчивое развитие туризма, «зеленые» отели, экологически ответственные гостиницы, эколейбл, экосертификация гостиниц, критерии экосертификации.

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